



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

July 27, 1998

H.R. 1856 **National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998**

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works on
July 22, 1998*

SUMMARY

Assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts, CBO estimates that implementing H.R. 1856 would cost \$17 million over the next five years. H.R. 1856 also would affect direct spending by allowing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to collect and spend amounts earned at wildlife refuges by certain nonfederal organizations. Pay-as-you-go procedures would therefore apply to the bill, but CBO estimates that any receipts and spending resulting from this authority would be less than \$550,000 annually. H.R. 1856 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACT'S MAJOR PROVISIONS

H.R. 1856 would amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to promote community involvement at national wildlife refuges. To encourage the use of individual volunteers, section 4 would direct the USFWS to conduct pilot projects under which a full-time volunteer coordinator would be hired for each of up to 20 refuges nationwide. This section also would authorize the agency to create a senior volunteer corps composed of volunteers over the age of 50 and would authorize for the corps (subject to appropriations under section 7) the payment of incidental expenses beyond those generally provided for volunteers such as reimbursements for mileage or fuel.

Section 5 would address more formal agency-community relationships by authorizing the USFWS to execute cooperative agreements with organizations such as nonprofit groups, academic institutions, and state or local agencies. Under such agreements, the partner organizations could help finance programs and projects that benefit wildlife refuges.

Amounts received by the agency under these agreements (that is, profits from sales or other activities conducted by the partner organization) would be deposited in a separate account in the U.S. Treasury and would be available without appropriation to carry out cooperative agreements and to pay volunteer expenses. The agency would be authorized (subject to appropriation) to match nonfederal funds donated under this section.

Section 6 would direct the USFWS to create a new refuge education program to provide outdoor classroom opportunities for students and to promote understanding and conservation of fish, wildlife, and other refuge resources.

Finally, H.R. 1856 would authorize the appropriation of \$2 million annually through fiscal year 2002 for the new pilot projects and \$2 million annually through 2004 for paying incidental volunteer expenses, implementing community partnership agreements, providing matching funds, and developing and implementing the new refuge education program.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

For purposes of this estimate, CBO assumes that the entire amounts authorized by H.R. 1856 will be appropriated for each fiscal year. Outlay estimates are based on spending patterns for similar programs. The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 1856 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION						
USFWS Baseline Spending Under Current Law						
Estimated Authorization Level ^a	595	619	641	664	686	711
Estimated Outlays	578	613	638	662	684	704
Proposed Changes						
Estimated Authorization Level	0	4	4	4	4	2
Estimated Outlays	0	3	4	4	4	2
USFWS Spending Under H.R. 1856						
Estimated Authorization Level ^a	595	623	645	668	690	713
Estimated Outlays	578	616	642	666	688	706

a. The 1998 level is the amount appropriated for USFWS resource management for that year. The levels shown for 1999 through 2003 are CBO baseline projections assuming increases for anticipated inflation.

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

The volunteer pilot projects, community partnership agreements, senior volunteer corps, and refuge education program authorized by this act would constitute new programs in the federal budget. There is no spending for such activities under current law. The table shows changes relative to CBO baseline projections, including increases for anticipated inflation, for USFWS resource management activities. If the comparison were made to a baseline without discretionary inflation, the incremental cost of the act would be the same—but the total estimated authorization level would be \$595 million for each year under current law and \$599 million for each year under H.R. 1856.

Enacting H.R. 1856 also would increase offsetting receipts and outlays from direct spending authority by allowing the USFWS to collect and use amounts earned by partner organizations. CBO estimates that this authority would generate offsetting receipts of less than \$500,000 annually. Because these collections would lead to additional spending in the same amounts, the net impact on the federal budget would be negligible in each year.

PAY-AS-YOU-GO CONSIDERATIONS

The Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985 specifies pay-as-you-go procedures for legislation affecting direct spending or receipts. Although enacting H.R. 1856 would affect direct spending, CBO estimates that the amounts involved would be less than \$500,000 annually.

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON STATE, LOCAL, AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

H.R. 1856 contains no intergovernmental mandates as defined in UMRA and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments. State and local entities might voluntarily incur some costs should they choose to enter into cooperative agreements with the Secretary of the Interior, as authorized by this legislation.

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR

H.R. 1856 would impose no new private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA.

PREVIOUS CBO ESTIMATE

On October 8, 1997, CBO submitted a cost estimate for H.R. 1856, the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Act of 1997, as ordered reported by the House Committee on Resources on October 1, 1997. The differences in the estimates reflect the differences in authorizations. The House version of H.R. 1856 would authorize about \$2 million a year through 2003, while the Senate version would authorize \$4 million a year for 1999 through 2002, and \$2 million a year for 2003 and 2004.

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